

ENVIRONMENTAL ENTREPRENEUR SUPPORT INITIATIVE

EESI PROJECT REPORT 2021-22



south african
urban food and
farming trust

Overview

The Environmental Entrepreneur Support Initiative (EESI) supports young leaders of exceptional ability who are already realising outcomes that advance environmental sustainability and who are at a point in their careers where they will benefit from support that enhances their leadership capacities. EESI identifies an annual environmental focus, and since 2019 urban agriculture has been one of the selections, with the SAUFF Trust chosen to manage that focus area of the programme.

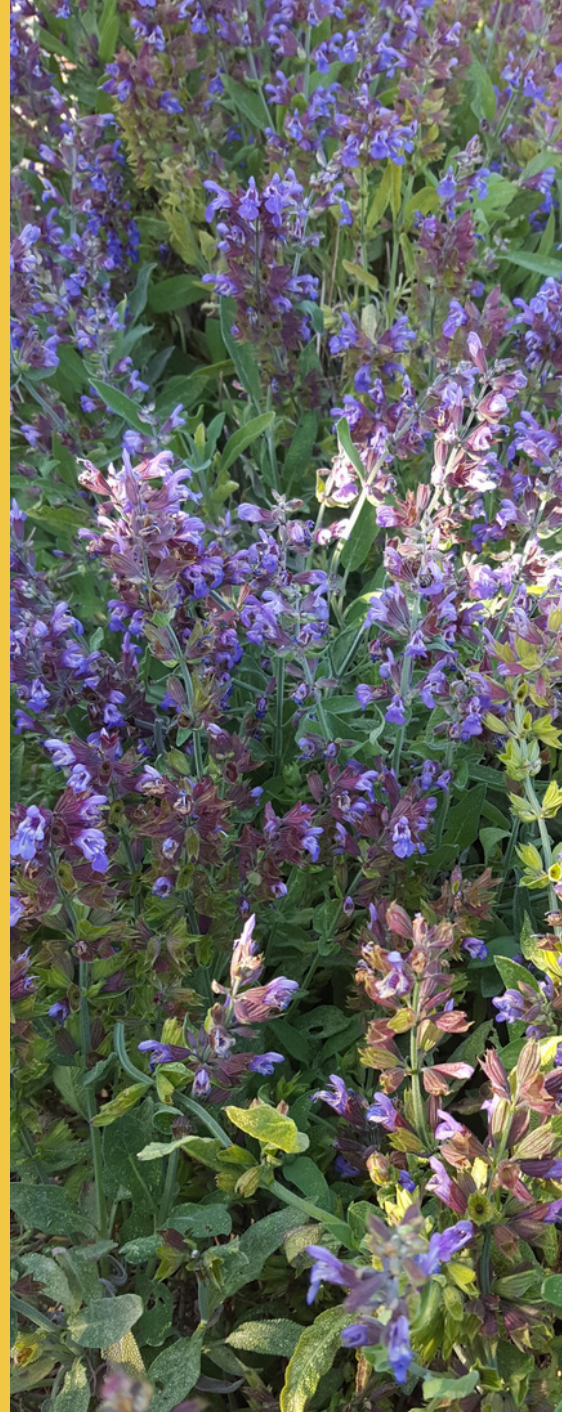
Objectives

The 2021-22 EESI project aimed to promote, enable and support the cultivation of diverse perennial food and medicinal crops by existing urban food gardeners and urban farmers in Langa, Cape Town in order to:

- Diversify incomes
- Improve soil health and sustainable pest management
- Improve yields through supporting pollinators via biological/organic pest control
- Beautify community spaces
- Establish wind breaks
- Enhance agricultural skills and knowledge

Programme Coordinator

To implement the project the SAUFF Trust appointed Chuma Mgcoyi, a permaculturalist and facilitator, founder of the community development NPO, Tyisa Nabanye.



Key Activities

The project was comprised of the following key activities, carried out over the project period:

- Extensive survey of Langa to identify as many community food gardens and farmers as possible
- Training and support programme implemented
- Data capture on impact measures at food gardens
- Delivery of materials (compost, plants)
- Support of Langa ECD Forum in establishing food gardens at their ECDs in ways that strengthen biodiversity and enhance the existing network of growers in Langa
- Support design of a propagation and nursery facility at the Lerotholi Food Garden in Langa
- Measure nett change in biodiversity through the programme at the food garden sites
- Ongoing mentoring by SAUFFT



Outputs

The following outputs resulted from the activities of the project:

- 15 community food gardens were supplied with 2200 perennial medicinal and culinary plants from 10 species.
- Farmers from 25 community food gardens participated in workshops and site visits, and were visited at least once monthly to provide ad hoc advisory/extension services.
- Contact database grew from 15 to 25 community food gardens. An additional 6 food gardens and 36 ECD centre garden sites were identified in Langa by the end of the programme for a total of 67 food gardens in the network.
- Establishment of a WhatsApp group for Langa community food gardens with 57 gardener members
- Soil Health workshops conducted with 47 gardeners
- Informal mentoring and ad hoc problem solving with food gardeners at 25 gardens at least 1 time/month
- 13 cubic metres of compost delivered to improve soil health
- Propagation training of entrepreneur for perennial herb production
- Transfer propagation and cultivation skills and understanding of input/material/infrastructure/tool requirements for perennial food and medicinal crops to Langa-based growers.
- Delivery and planting of over 2200 perennial culinary and medicinal plants from 10 different species at the community food gardens.

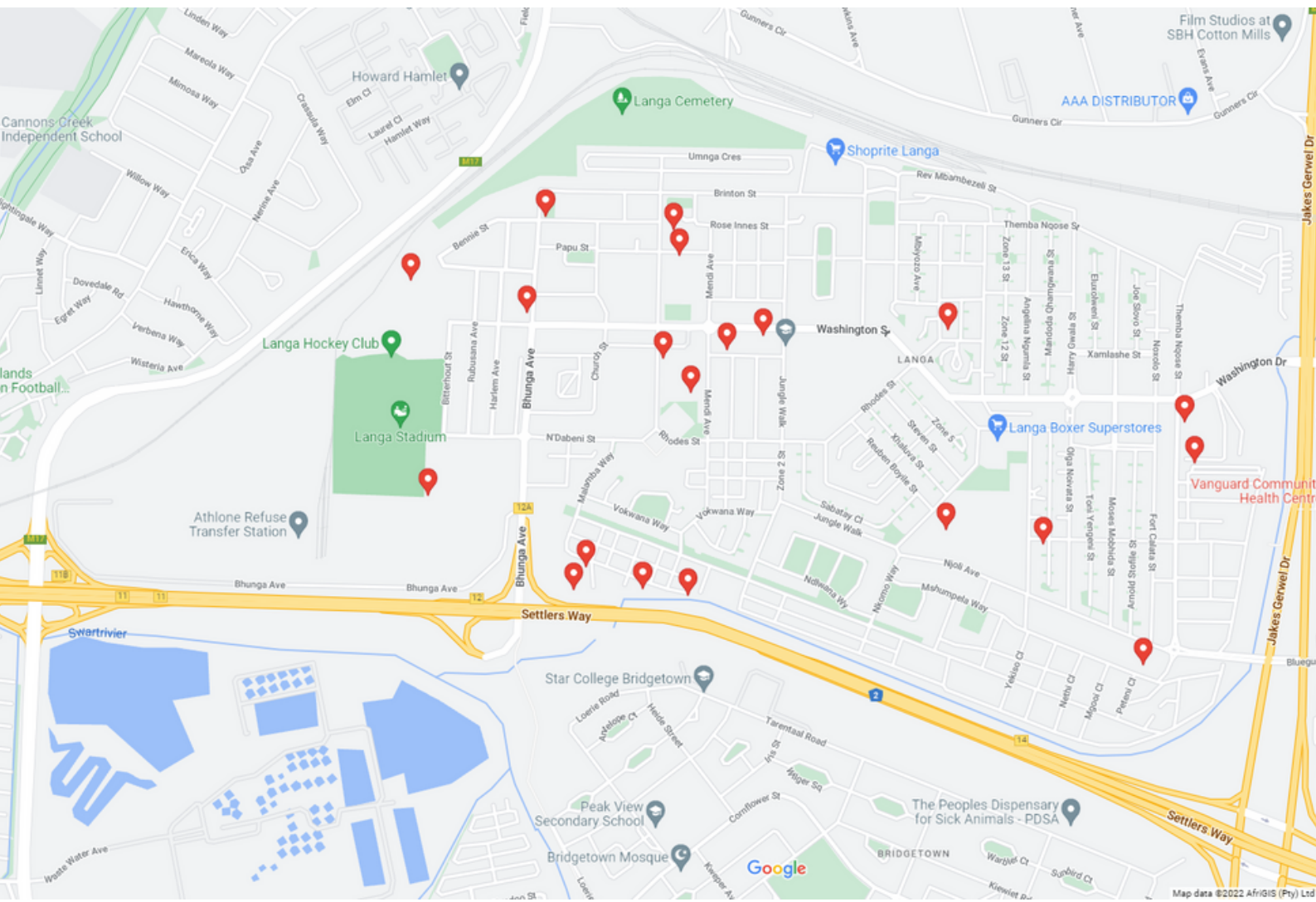


Langa Food Gardens Engaged



Inkandla Community garden
Rasta Bhunga garden
Zone 22 community Garden
Leap School Zone 17 garden
Ikhaya Lelanga gardens
Yeyethu injongo garden
Rasta Presbyterian garden
Police station Garden
Office garden
Lerotholi food garden
Organic Eden garden
Siyabulela School garden
Zimasa School garden

Isilimela School garden
Mosheshe School garden
Mokona School garden
Them bani School garden
Bridges School of Music garden
Hospitality School garden
N2 gateway garden
Langa Chesire garden
Vukuzenzele community garden
Community Aids Organization Garden
Vuyo Garden
Sinethemba LweSivuno



Project Impacts

The project concluded with many of the tasks completed successfully, but not all tasks were completed and not all goals were reached. However, in spite of the pandemic context and other unforeseeable circumstances, the impacts of the project were significant and positive.

The following were completed to help achieve the planned impacts of the programme:

- A large number of food gardens have been brought into a network and all have received communications of various types regarding the value of biodiversity for their gardening.
- Of the 15 initial gardens engaged in the first half of the programme, and which received their share of 2200 plants, 7 were assessed as High Impact gardens for biodiversity as sites that are effectively using and expanding biodiversity to improve soil health and improve farmer well-being and income, and educating and supporting others to do the same. Another 3 were assessed as Moderate Impact. Only 3 of 15 were showing minimal to no impact by the end of the programme.
- Compost was provided to these food gardens to improve soil microbial biodiversity and long-term soil fertility.
- A formal package of training and support was partially completed. Less formal one-on-one mentoring and knowledge sharing has taken place more extensively and regularly at each food garden site.
- See the annexure for further reporting from the entrepreneur.



Impact Summary

Impact Area	Impact Achieved	Comments
Increase in biodiverse greenspaces	2200 seedlings and plants were distributed to 15 garden sites. 7 High Impact gardens were expanding their biodiversity by the end of the programme, while 3 were sustaining it.	<p>Calculation of square metres of biodiversity proved to be extremely difficult and impractical.</p> <p>52 additional gardens were engaged with information regarding the value of biodiversity. These were linked to the High Impact gardens through a WhatsApp group and personal relationships among farmers were facilitated through workshops. As a consequence, the likelihood of continued increase of biodiverse greenspaces in Langa is good.</p>
Adoption of biodiversity-enhancing farming practices	7 High Impact gardens are utilising these practices effectively, another 3 are using them well but would benefit from further support and training.	Biodiversity as an aspect of food gardening has become more of a norm among the community food gardens in Langa. Interest in and receptivity to further information and training on these practices is greatly increased.
Reduction of non-organic pesticide use	No impact was possible to achieve as non-organic pesticides were not found to be in use at any of the food gardens.	No impact was possible to achieve as non-organic pesticides were not found to be in use at any of the food gardens.
Improvement of livelihoods and well-being through use of new crops	Farmers across the 15 core gardens reported using various of the perennial plants for personal medicinal or culinary purposes. No use for livelihood improvement was noted.	Further work needs to be undertaken to assist the farmers in developing markets for these crops and how to price and sell them. The planned workshop to do this was not implemented.

Issues & Challenges

The following planned project tasks were not completed:

Task: Market Access, Production Planning and Propagation workshop

Reason: The workshop was planned and scheduled twice but was never held due to low availability of farmers and safety/logistical barriers. The first date in late January was confirmed by the farmers in advance but practical circumstances found too many of them remaining out of town as part of atypically extended seasonal/holiday travel to family in rural areas (e.g., the Eastern Cape). The second date turned out to be affected by a taxi strike and protest. The opportunity for a third date was not possible within the programme duration.

Task: Establishment and operation of a propagation and nursery facility at the Lerotholi Food Garden in Langa

Reason: The infrastructure was delayed in its installation from what had been projected by the SAUFF Trust. As a consequence, the EESI programme could not make use of the facility. An alternative was identified on an interim basis at one of the Langa gardens in Zone 10 where there is a shade house and security.

Task: Survey of food gardens regarding income and yield changes over the project period

Reason: This survey was to be conducted as part of the Market Access, Production Planning and Propagation workshop, however that workshop was not held (see above).



Issues & Challenges

The following challenges were identified:

The pandemic impacted this project in many ways. All members of the project team and nearly all of the farmers had Covid, and many experienced the loss of loved ones. Restrictions on indoor gatherings was also an issue, hampering training. Reduced numbers permitted in vehicles limited the value of site visits due to fewer people being able to participate.

Chuma suffered the death of her boyfriend under shocking circumstances. While she was able to continue with her work after a break, which she strongly wanted to do, she was not able to work with the same consistency and effectiveness.

The project laptop was stolen, resulting in delays, the loss of data and photos, and increased cost to the project. Chuma's phone was also stolen three times during the project period, causing communications challenges.



Analysis & Recommendations

Given the unprecedented circumstances of the pandemic, one is cautious in drawing lessons for the future from this programme period. The direct and indirect consequences of the pandemic greatly affected the project. While this pandemic seems to be playing itself out and some semblance of predictable 'normalcy' is returning, uncertainty remains a risk factor that must be planned and prepared for more extensively in any future project.

The project was also greatly affected by violence and crime, which is prevalent in the broader society and in Langa in particular. The experiences of violent trauma and the (repeated) loss through theft of technology and data, as well as the disruption of project activities due to taxi-related violence, had a disruptive effect well beyond anything previously encountered in EESI projects or in our work in Langa (or elsewhere). In exploring the potential causes for this, some have suggested that the pandemic increased theft and other crimes due to greater economic hardship among residents of vulnerable communities like Langa.

As a consequence of some of these challenges, our entrepreneur took a lot of strain and was not operating at her typical level of energy in the final few months of the programme. It was remarkable, after the traumatic death of her boyfriend, that she chose to continue with the programme without taking a longer break. We can note continued improvement generally, but she remains a changed person in many ways. We have enquired about her support and medical resources, and she has advised that she is getting what she feels she needs. She also communicates frequently with her mother, a pastor, with whom we have also spoken.



Analysis & Recommendations

In spite of the personal struggles she endured, the impact of the project on Chuma herself, as the supported entrepreneur, was strongly positive. In particular, her confidence as an enabler of others has grown notably. She has grown in her self-understanding and self-actualisation from a facilitator and instructor into a mentor who helps people understand and strengthen their own abilities. She has taken on a role as a catalyst and connector, an activator and builder of networks.

This growth for Chuma has also come with some important realisations of her own limitations and weaknesses: she is not a writer, and her skills with apps and digital technologies generally need to be stronger. She has been working to improve in both areas, recognising that these could otherwise hold her back over the long term.

She has also learned to navigate better the space between identifying and understanding someone's challenges on the one hand, and how those challenges are addressed on the other; she has learned to guide and support others in solving their own problems instead of jumping in to start to solve them herself.

Chuma's strengths have been recognised by others as well, as reflected in an invitation to present at a youth conference in Nairobi on working at the grass roots as a change agent for urban sustainability in marginalised communities. Unfortunately, the pandemic forced that conference into a virtual format, but the international connections have been strengthened and other opportunities for building on these are being explored.

In addition to the growth (and setbacks) experienced by the entrepreneur herself, the effects of the project within the community were substantial and positive. While much is detailed in the pages above, the most lasting impacts are likely to be the presence of mature, perennial biodiversity at sites across Langa, and the shift of expectations of urban food gardeners to plant, tend and benefit from biodiversity as part of their gardens. There are encouraging signs that, in Langa, a food garden without perennial plant biodiversity is on track to become a norm.

We will be continuing to monitor and support this trend, and to look for opportunities to extend it into other communities where our organisation also works with food gardens and urban farmers.